



Combat Conflict Fearlessly and Fair

Start Here
Coaching Services

Creating healthy boundaries that make everyone feel safe and heard

Below is one of my favorite exercises! Arguments usually consist of 2 or more people talking over one another and not listening. Why? Because we are afraid we won't be heard or that we will forget what we want to say. This exercise provides opportunities for everyone to speak and be heard. It emphasizes active listening and engagement. Read through the guidelines and see if you would like to try it.

Participant size: 2 to 6 participants

Central Focus: This exercise provides a fair platform for sharing and active listening. Participants should focus on facts (what would hold up in court) and react in the moment. The exercise opens lines of communication and allows participants an opportunity to rebuild trust while witnessing first-hand how to resolve conflict with deliberate steps. *Each person has equal opportunity to speak and listen without interruption.*

Estimated completion time: Depending on group size the exercise will take about 45 minutes to 2 hours

Prep: For this exercise, you will need a timer, a designated timekeeper, paper and writing instruments for each participant. You may also opt to take turns keeping time.

Guidelines That Must Be Absolutely, Positively and Without Exception Followed:

- Each participant will have two roles, *Speaker* and *Listener*.
- When a participant is the **Speaker**, other participants are **Listeners** and may not interrupt.
- While listening to the Speaker, Listeners will write down interjections, thoughts, feelings and share when it is their turn as the **Speaker**.
- Stay on topic and talk about recent issues. Discussing something from 30 years ago may be tempting, but is this a good use of your time? Try to reference NOW issues. You can always ask for what would make you happy and feel safe going forward.
- Focus on the situation or how another's actions made you feel. Don't talk about another person's character. Chances are you are doing this exercise with someone you care about, so give CARE to the words you use.
- When talking about the actions of people not present only say things you would say in front of them.
- Don't tell others what to say, feel or behave. This isn't your call. Don't use phrases like "You always," "You never."
- Don't call people names, yell, shout or throw things. If this happens, **stop the exercise**.

Exercise

- Exercise will consist of 5 rounds (**Round 1**= unlimited time, **Round 2**= 8 minutes, **Round 3**= 5 minutes, **Round 4**=3 minutes, **Round 5**= 2 minutes)
- During **Round 1**, once a Speaker has finished, they say, "Thank you. Your turn." **Rounds 2-5** are timed. If time expires mid-sentence, the Speaker may finish their sentence and pick up incomplete thoughts in the next round. Simply write down where you would like pick up when it's your turn again.
 1. **Decide who will begin:** Don't make an argument about this. Flip a coin if you have to!
 2. **Round 1 - Without a time limit.**



Combat Conflict Fearlessly and Fair

Speaker guidelines:

- a. Say out loud the facts as you see them concerning the situation/conflict. No one must agree with their version! Share your feelings (sad, frustrated, ignored, angry).
- b. Share what you would like. Share what would make you feel safe, feel loved and secure.
- c. Take as much time as you need. What you want to say is important.
- d. Don't feel like you must say EVERYTHING during the first round. You will get another turn.

Listener guidelines:

- a. Don't speak if you aren't the Speaker. As a Listener, write down your thoughts about what the speaker is saying and what you would like to address once you are the Speaker.
- b. Try to remember that everyone has their own version of the "truth" as we see events through our own unique lens. Multiple versions CAN be true at the same time.
- c. Try to keep an open mind and stay tethered to the idea that everyone can have a WIN if peace, harmony and tranquility is the goal.

Continue Round 1 until every member has had the opportunity to speak **without a time limit**.

3. **Following Rounds** – Use the timer for the following rounds. Begin with the Speaker and continue in order, using the same speaker/listener guidelines until each round is complete. Remember, it's okay if you don't get all your thoughts or points made. You may finish your thought one you are the Speaker.

Successful Outcomes:

- Be okay with not finding absolute resolution.
- This exercise can be a beginning to great communication. If additional discussion is needed, plan date/time (within 3 weeks) to repeat the exercise.
- Use the time between exercises to look at your notes, decide what is important to you, and ready yourself for the next exercise. Consider this time as an opportunity to clear out the "noise" or language that does not serve you or the people you care about. You don't have to share everything you think.
- Exercise success depends on the willingness and engagement of all participants. However, if guidelines are followed, each participant is assured an opportunity to share their thoughts and listen to others.
- Everyone is asked to be open to the possibility that complete resolution may not happen immediately or ever, as we cannot control the level of engagement of others.
- Individuals actively seeking self-improvement and growth may use the experience as a self-reflection tool and note personal areas that need improvement.
- Use this exercise as a template. You can nuance and customize any parts of it, however, keep the guidelines that keep communications on track and allows everyone to be heard and to feel safe.